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ABSTRACT

This book begins by tracing the history of curriculum development and the subjugation of rural school districts to curriculum decisions made from afar and tailored to urban needs. Local and teacher interpretation of the formal curriculum gave rise to the enacted curriculum, or that which was actually taught in classrooms. But for rural schools, the most powerful aspect of curriculum is the hidden curriculum, which refers to the influence of community values and mores. In an effort to illustrate the mechanics of curriculum development in rural schools, a year-long study was conducted at Neosho High School in rural southern Indiana, which was considering a comprehensive reform of its curriculum. Data were gathered through questionnaires and interviews completed by 18 of the school's 19 teachers, document reviews, and observations. Low teacher salaries led to a high turnover rate of teachers and administrators, so that few felt confident in devoting much effort to producing a new curriculum. There was poor communication among teachers. The teachers generally perceived local school board members to be inflexible, unimaginative, and uneducated. While these factors may appear marginal to the concept of curriculum, they were interwoven into daily school life and unavoidably became part of the enacted curriculum. Five recommendations are based in the importance of encouraging and providing opportunities for curricular discussion among teachers and administrators. An appendix presents graduation requirements for Neosho High School. (Contains 149 references and an index) (TD)

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